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Letter dated 8 April 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a statement issued on 3 April 2003 by the Government of the Republic of Uganda on Security Council resolution 1468 (2003) (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Prof. **Semakula Kiwanuka**, Ph.D
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Annex to the letter dated 8 April 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Statement issued on 3 April 2003 by the Republic of Uganda on Security Council resolution 1468 (2003)

Uganda welcomes Security Council resolution 1468 (2003) adopted on 20 March 2003. Therefore, in this statement, Uganda hails the position of the Security Council on pertinent issues and reflects on some matters of concern raised in the resolution.

Inter-Congolese dialogue

Uganda joins the Security Council, and the international community in general, in welcoming the agreement reached by the Congolese parties in Pretoria on 6 March 2003 on the transitional arrangements for a permanent political dispensation in the Congo.

Uganda further welcomes the resolve by the Congolese parties when they finalized outstanding matters and signed the Final Act on 2 April 2003 in Sun City, Republic of South Africa. Also most significant was the Global and Inclusive Agreement signed in Pretoria on 17 December 2002, together with the Additional Memorandum on the Army and Security signed in Pretoria on 6 March 2003, and the Constitution of the Transition adopted at Sun City on 1 April 2003. All the tireless efforts exerted, especially those by the facilitator of the Dialogue and the Republic of South Africa, are hailed. Uganda encourages the Congolese parties to stay the course and implement the Agreement they have reached without let or hindrance.

The situation in Ituri

Uganda shares the concern of the Security Council on the situation in Ituri Province. The situation in Ituri is characterized by inter-tribal and factional clashes, detrimental to the lives and security of the population in the area. It is indeed because of this consideration that Uganda deemed a vacuum would be created and the situation further aggravated if Ugandan troops were withdrawn without alternative arrangements.

It is therefore gratifying that the United Nations, which acknowledges the above position, has through the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) been playing a positive role in efforts to seek alternative security arrangements for Ituri.

The Luanda Agreement and the significance of the Ituri Pacification Committee (IPC)

The Luanda Agreement of 6 September 2003 between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, facilitated by Angola, establishes the basis for a settlement in the Ituri area, as the resolution underscores.

The IPC, under the Luanda Agreement, is to ensure security and the setting up of an interim administration and security arrangement for Ituri and thereby enable the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the area. The agreement to establish the IPC

was to find a way forward for the good of all the parties concerned, and this was because no other alternative arrangement was forthcoming.

Threats by Rwanda

As the Security Council has stressed that all the parties must cooperate with MONUC to set up the IPC without further delay and take the necessary steps to restore public order in Bunia, Uganda is concerned at threats posed by Rwanda and its proxy, the Union des Patriotes Congolais (UPC). The IPC could not take off as anticipated in the Luanda Agreement because of the intransigence of UPC prompted and supported by Rwanda. Indeed, a note of concern should be taken in view of Rwanda's response dated 24 March 2003 to Security Council resolution 1468 (2003), challenging the Luanda Agreement and, in particular, what it called the IPC concept.

Uganda is also gravely concerned at the new dimension to the situation in Ituri. Uganda has evidence that the plan by Rwanda and its proxy UPC, which led to the attacks on Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) positions on 6 March 2003, included simultaneous launching of a Ugandan rebel group called the People's Redemption Army (PRA). Indeed, 22 PRA dissidents were captured and they confessed that they were supported by Rwanda.

Measures to facilitate humanitarian assistance and the IPC

The resolution demands that all the parties, and in particular in Ituri, ensure the security of civilian populations and grant to MONUC and to humanitarian organizations full and unimpeded access to the populations in need. It also stresses that all parties must cooperate with MONUC to set up, without further delay, the IPC and that the necessary steps must be taken to restore public order in Bunia, in accordance with the agreements reached among Congolese parties and within the framework of the IPC.

Following the attacks of 6 March 2003 and the associated threats, the UPDF decided to deploy adequate forces to stabilize the whole of Bunia town and its environs. It secured roads to Bunia to ensure supply of food and humanitarian assistance to the population. It also ensured a secure environment in which the process to put the IPC in place could begin, in accordance with the Luanda Agreement. Having achieved these objectives, UPDF military operations have stopped.

The intervention has enabled corridors for humanitarian assistance to be established. It has also enabled the process of establishing the IPC to start. An agreement for a ceasefire in Ituri Province was signed on 18 March 2003 in Bunia. Only UPC did not sign. The signing of the ceasefire agreement paved the way for the Preparatory Committee for the IPC to start its work on 19 March 2003. The IPC is now constituted, with seats for UPC, and its first meeting started on 1 April 2003. It was officially inaugurated in Bunia on 4 April 2003. Uganda hopes that the process will not be interrupted, so that the IPC can do its work leading to the withdrawal of UPDF, as the Luanda Agreement stipulates. It is worth noting that throughout this process we have been cooperating with MONUC, which is actively involved in the establishment and facilitation of the IPC. UPDF is not only securing Bunia and its environs but it is also providing security for the IPC.

Increase of MONUC's presence, humanitarian assistance and support to the IPC

Uganda welcomes the Security Council decision that the Secretary-General should increase MONUC's presence in the Ituri area, especially to take charge of the airports. However, MONUC should do more than observe. The United Nations could also take other necessary measures, including setting up a radar station to deter arms air-drops.

Uganda also welcomes the decision that the Secretary-General provide further support and assistance to humanitarian efforts and facilitate the formation of the IPC and assist the work of the Commission. The support will go a long way towards enhancing the ongoing efforts.

Withdrawal of Ugandan troops

The resolution calls upon Uganda to complete withdrawal of all its troops without further delay. Uganda wishes to reiterate its commitment to fully withdraw its troops in Ituri as soon as an alternative security arrangement is put in place to provide security to the population, in accordance with the Luanda Agreement, or any other initiative deemed appropriate by the United Nations is established. Uganda will therefore not stay in Ituri a day more than is required for UPDF to contribute towards a secure environment for the population and the IPC.

As to the Uganda Government's commitment to withdraw by 20 March 2003, this was not met because the IPC had not been established to create an alternative administrative and security arrangement for the area. The parties to the Luanda Agreement, under the facilitation of Angola, have been constantly monitoring the situation, including the calendar, which they have been revising as and when the situation demands. MONUC has also been helpful in the negotiations. Now that the IPC is in place, the best thing to do is to build on the achievements so far and ensure its success. For its part, Uganda will continue playing its part and is ready to withdraw its troops at the earliest opportunity.

Concerns of rising tensions between Rwanda and Uganda

Concerned by the rising tensions between Rwanda and Uganda, Uganda continues to pursue peaceful means for the resolution of differences between the two countries. Under the mediation of Minister Clare Short of Britain, the two countries reached understanding on how to handle issues of difference, including establishing a verification mechanism for dealing with accusations and counter-accusations. The mechanism is observed by the mediator's representatives. However, Rwanda has been defying the agreed procedure, making wild allegations and pronouncements in the press, contrary to the London understanding of October 2001. This has been worrisome, because words have been followed by deeds of war-like actions. There has been movement of troops to the common border and movement of troops to North Kivu in areas vacated in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement. All these actions and the earlier ones referred to in this document leave us under no doubt that Rwanda has sinister motives against Uganda.

Outrageous allegations that Uganda has formed alliance with genocidal forces

The tensions between Rwanda and Uganda referred to in the resolution are the creation of Rwanda. It has been inciting the public against Uganda by linking

Uganda to the perpetrators of genocide. The outrageous allegation that Uganda has formed an alliance with the genocidal forces (Interahamwe/Ex-Forces Armés Rwandaises (Ex-FAR) and Rwandan Liberation Army (ALIR) to attack Rwanda cannot be imagined!! It pains Uganda that we are being associated with the Interahamwe and other perpetrators of genocide. Like Rwanda, one of the reasons we went into Congo was because of these criminals and to ensure a non-recurrence of genocide in the region. At a time when nothing was being done, Uganda stood side by side with Rwanda to castigate genocide, both in words and deed. Therefore, it is ironical and insulting that Rwanda makes such wild and unsubstantiated allegations. We shall never work with Interahamwe. The Rwanda/Uganda Joint Verification and Investigation Committee, under Minister Clare Short's mediation, has gone to all sorts of places and has not found any shred of proof in support of the allegation. Again, Uganda can only interpret this blatant posture by Rwanda as looking for all sorts of excuses to justify its sinister motives against Uganda.

Conclusion

Uganda makes assurances that it has no designs whatsoever to harm Rwanda. However, if attacked, Uganda would exercise its right to defend itself.

On the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace process and regional peace in the Great Lakes Region generally, Uganda remains committed to the return of normalcy in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement, the Luanda Agreement and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Uganda remains committed to withdraw its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as alternative security arrangements are put in place to provide security in Ituri, either through the IPC or any third party the Security Council may deem appropriate.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Republic of Uganda